Abstract:

"Can We Reach Equitable Growth in the Arab World?--Civil society as a key partner"

Fighting poverty, promoting economic and equitable growth, protecting health and the environment--as many public goals that are above politics, but also beyond the capacity of governments by themselves.  Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have traditionally played a key role in achieving progress in development at the global, national and local levels.

First, this presentation will start with concrete examples of success stories at each of these three levels (polio, arsenic and internet) as examples of partnerships between Civil Society Organizations and public and international organizations.

Second, the UN Millenium Development Goals will be presented as a framework to promote partnerships with CSOs to address the most urgent global priorities (hunger, poverty, education, health, gender inequality, environment, governance). Progress in achieving the Millenium Development Goals in the Arab Countries will be provided, as well as some priorities for CSOs to help in achieving faster progress as we approach the deadline of 2015.

Finally, presentation will conclude by asking whether the CSOs in the Arab countries and Lebanon in particular will take the challenge of going from being limited to being "service providers" to becoming full partners in defining strategies, policies and development priorities.  Taking advantage of the presence of municipal and local officials in the audience, the presentation will present the case of CSO participation in the development of sub-national regions in order to fight inequality.

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